



QUESTIONS FOR DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH (DPH) COMMISSIONER NOMINEE

By: James Orlando, Senior Legislative Attorney

COMMISSIONER OF PUBLIC HEALTH ([CGS §§ 19A-1A, -1D, AND -2A](#))

The commissioner is responsible for the department's overall operation and administration. To this end, he or she must use the most efficient and practical means to prevent and suppress disease; contract for facilities, services, and programs to implement the department's purposes; secure, compile, and disseminate data on prevention and control of epidemics; annually issue a list of reportable diseases, emergency illnesses and health conditions, and reportable laboratory findings; inspect health care institutions; and oversee local health directors.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. Describe the mission of DPH. As commissioner, how do you ensure that the department meets this mission?
2. If asked to prioritize those public health issues most important to you, what would they be?
3. Do you believe that the department has the adequate resources, in terms of both personnel and budget, to meet its statutory obligations?
4. Are you anticipating any restructuring of the department in the near future that will affect its duties, responsibilities, and priorities?
5. How is the scope of practice review committee process working? (Under a process established in 2011, review committees created by DPH evaluate requests by health care professions seeking to change or establish a scope of practice; the review committees provide findings to the Public Health Committee.)

CURRENT ISSUES

1. The press and legislature have been giving considerable attention to financial challenges at some nonprofit hospitals, including the recent deal with Tenet that fell through. Given the existing budgetary climate, how can the state help hospitals facing financial difficulties?
2. Much attention has also been paid to the increased consolidation of physician practices, such as mergers or hospitals buying practices. [PA 14-168](#) includes provisions addressing this issue (e.g., it requires (1) certificate of need approval for certain group practice ownership transfers and (2) parties to certain transactions involving material changes to group practices to notify the attorney general). Do you think the state's oversight of these transactions is sufficient?
3. Briefly describe the department's response to the possible threat from Ebola last fall. What can the state do better?
4. Increasing access to primary care providers was one of the stated rationales for last year's legislation allowing independent practice by advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) with certain experience. What else can the state do to ensure an adequate supply of primary care providers?
5. How is the Connecticut Vaccine Program working? Are you concerned that the number of parents seeking exemptions for their children, while still low, has been increasing in recent years?
6. You have stated concerns about the disparities in services offered by local health departments and districts. A new law requires local health departments and certain districts, within available appropriations, to provide a basic health program consisting of various components as a prerequisite to receiving annual funding from DPH. Would regionalizing local health services further address these disparities?
7. Last year, the legislature banned the sale of e-cigarettes to minors. Some current legislative proposals seek to further regulate e-cigarettes (such as making e-cigarettes subject to the same smoke-free laws as traditional cigarettes). How do you think the state should regulate e-cigarettes? What role do you think e-cigarettes play in smoking cessation?

JO:jk/tjo